

The Philosophy of WildSeed

At its core, the Philosophy of WildSeed is a Philosophy of Liberation. Here Philosophy is taken to mean the pursuit to understand and commune with the beautiful, the good, and the true and the praxis of living in alignment with one's understanding of the beautiful, the good and the true. By the beautiful, the good and true I mean the core questions of the human experience. The beautiful is about pleasure as much as aesthetics of how things look; beautiful experiences that seem to connect us to rich experiential abundance that can be seen as an essential part of human life. To study the beautiful is to ask why that is (or appears to some to be) and what can we draw out about life and how to live by thinking about what looks and feels right. To study the good is ask our selves what should we do and why should we do it? Is the best human action what is beautiful or brings the most beauty to life or is it something else? To study to the truth is the ask, fundamentally, how can we know things? There are many things we believe or sense but what do we know really?

It seems that most, if not all cultures engage with these questions on some level whether the culture takes classical Mediterranean approach of formal inquiry into these questions by specialist called Philosophers or whether the questions are pursued through every day action perhaps with decorated tools that are simultaneously functional, beautiful and used to make sense of the world through action. A more contemporary American approach to these questions might be how should we be together (what is beautiful and good in human interactions), how do figure out what real and what's fake (what is truth) and how can we life a good life (what is the good)? All of these questions require at some level, as sense of what it means to be human. Not all cultures ask this question in their philosophy explicitly but culture requires people, and if you are going to interact with people in the regular and patterned ways that cultural creation suggests you are going to develop ideas about people. So we could also say, that a lot of philosophy is, at its core, about what it means to be human. So if that's philosophy than what is a philosophy of Liberation?

Liberation is taken to mean an unfettered way of being, unique to each individual but only accessible in community, that is always possible. Liberation is not the license of liberty but an empowered and substantive freedom where we have the capacity, skill and willing partners to co-create a life-world of universal mutual recognition, belonging, purpose, joy and nurturance. Liberation is the highest manifestation of the creative-love-force-wisdom inside of us—that supreme connection to the spirit of all-that-is—waiting to be unleashed and stewarded by all sentient beings on behalf of all life. Liberation is a path towards world where we can all get our needs met with dignity, joy and abundance.

In some ways Liberation is a complex answer to the fundamental questions of Philosophy. It suggests that the beautiful arises from the erotic, the deeply felt sense of excellence that is a mixture of visceral feelings and the cultural stories we tell about those feelings. It suggests the good as pursuing full articulation of that erotic excellence in partnership with other people. In a sense, making our highest desires real through consensual, intentional social action. Liberation

also suggests that there are two kinds of truth an absolute truth that our heart-minds can experience but never fully understand or articulate and relative truth which are aspects of the absolute that we interpret and bring to bear on our current context. Such a view of truth suggests that it is something both found and made in individual and collective processes of living. This is very different from the two major contemporary standard views of truth as either something revealed by prophets or discovered by scientist. Lastly, Liberation understands that a person is a person through other people. Our care, collaboration and collective meaning making are what makes something people, including non-human people like Elephants, Octopi and maybe even the earth itself. A human being then, is person with the capacity to understand its own personhood and share it intentionally with others.

That is to say, under a liberation lens, humanness is self-reflective capacity to understand yourself in relation to other people and narrate that understanding (in words and deeds) for collective thriving.

So the Philosophy of WildSeed is a praxis (a practice of acting, reflecting on that action and then acting again with wisdom gleaned from that reflection) of individual sensing combined with collective meaning making, building and iterating on a world in which everyone can get their spiritual, physical and emotional needs met with dignity and joy. This praxis will naturally look different for different people, in different contexts at different times. It will also be interpreted differently by people with different ontologies.

We don't talk about ontology enough in everyday life. Let alone epistemology (the study of how we know what we know) or metaphysics (the rules that govern these things we believe to be true). Yes, ontology is a deeply academic word for a sometimes abstract field of formal philosophy. But it is also describing a real life thing that we all interact with everyday. Namely, ontology is the field of the study of nature of being; which is fancy way of saying studying what things exist and what things don't exist. Do stars exist? Yes. Do unicorn exist? No (I mean...what does it mean to exist?) Do we live in the matrix, a computer simulation of 21 century society? Hopefully...Those are questions of ontology.

As abstract as it may seem, we act from ontological beliefs a hundred times a day. We usually think of them as culture but cultural practices often stem from ontological beliefs. For instance, the idea that land is an object we can own and not a living being who in some sense owns us is an ontological belief. Every time we pay rent without question or grumble is an action that stems from ontological view of the world as a series of objects to be owned by individual people. This is a rather extreme ontology at odds with longstanding beliefs in most parts of the world throughout most of history. Whenever we feel like we are not enough because we are not doing enough, we are experiencing our bodies conditioned ontological commitment to view of people as humans doing and producing rather than being. A world in which everyone gets their needs met with dignity is only a desirable world for people who hold an ontological belief that people don't need to earn a living. That is to say, a desire for universal care and support stems from an ontological belief that a person is being universally worthy of care (or perhaps an ethical belief that care is realm of social action that does not need to be earned.)

This is not say that cultural practice can't create ontology. The ontological belief in white supremacy developed centuries after the institution of European driven chattel slavery was first brought to the Americas. It was both an attempt to naturalize a cultural practice in order to legitimize it and the result of the simple fact that people in hierarchical societies have been conditioned to assume that people who are treated unequally are unequal (or perhaps more accurately if they are treated better it is because they are better.) It is most accurate to understand ontologies as systems in which cultural and economic practices are a part. These ontological systems are then part of larger social systems.

Due to the fact that Philosophy of WildSeed is not based in any existing single culture—it's really a synergy of the wisdom of many cultural and ontological traditions--it is useful to explicitly lay out its ontological and broader philosophical underpinnings. Again, these Philosophical beliefs are not set in stone. They are not revealed by a prophet nor discovered by a scientist. They are insights from science and revelation that have been refined by social action. They are drawn from the divine revelations of world religions, the insights of contemporary science and Metis (or knowledge drawn from practical experience) of communities trying to build a better world. Of course, they are articulated with tools from the humanities.

At this point, it would probably be helpful to clarify how we are using the terms philosophy, science, humanities and revelation our use of these terms is a bit idiosyncratic but for good reason. There is a long history in the west to universalize the ways Europe (particularly Western Europe) thinks about actions or categories of human activity. Philosophy is lifted up as a central facet of human civilization and we begin to look for other versions of it in other cultures. Yet sometimes, what we in the west think is universal is particular to a set of European cultures. So, if we define Philosophy as practice of individual philosophers taking the common sense of their society and writing down analysis and critique of it while before making a personal statement on the "truth" then only a few cultures have developed philosophy. Historically this has led to considering such cultures as lacking philosophy instead of developing other ways to commune with the good, the beautiful and the true. Fortunately, this is no longer the case. Yet we are still faced with a problem in that we don't really have words for these things in English (which is the shared language of WildSeed at the moment). Thus when we want to compare and contrast--or better yet synthesize--wisdom from two different cultures we tend to be at a loss for neutral conceptions.

Therefore we have chosen to use the most applicable English words and give them explicit (if somewhat idiosyncratic) definitions. So when we talk about Philosophy we mean the attempt to understand and commune with fundamental ideas about human existence like the good (ethics or moral), the beautiful (art, decoration, adornment and aesthetics) and the true (knowledge, wisdom, epistemology, revelation, logic etc).

We talk about science we mean the practice of cataloging data about the world through the external senses and experimentation as well as formal manipulations of data through math. Here we are heavily influenced by Paul Feyerband's against method. The formal scientific method (observation->problem stating->hypothesis stating->experimentation-> analysis) is only one way of doing science and is not actually main way that scientific knowledge advances. Much of quantum physics is currently being investigated by literally throwing things at each other really fast and seeing what comes out. This is not any less scientific than any other method. In the same vein the wisdom traditions of indigenous people's also have scientific traditions. The people (many anthropologist suggest it likely women) who created pottery, tamed fire and first tended gardens were all doing a form of science.

Furthermore, as Feyerband notes "No theory ever agrees with all the facts in its domain, yet it is not always the theory that is to blame. Facts are constituted by older ideologies, and a class between facts and theories may be proof of progress." (page 5) Again, all science can do is accumulate data (bits of information) through observation and experimentation. Analyzing data requires either the creation of a new ideology or applying the principles of existing ideology. Here we take ideology to mean a world view or a system of ideas about how social and ontological objects relate to each other and interact.

Many modern scientific ideologies include beliefs like our position in the universe isn't unique and that the universe is basically the same everywhere. These beliefs are what allow us to extract data from our local experience and turn them into facts about the universe as a whole. There is evidence to back up these beliefs but there are in no way proven. One could obviously say, intelligent life has only been found on earth so that would make use special and this region of the universe potentially different. Similarly, many west African ideologies are polycentric, which means that assume that different aspects of existence are governed by different rules. Much of science can be characterized as scientist organizing facts under a preexisting ideology until so many points of data fall outside the ideology that a new one is needed. This is what Kuhn famously called "normal science" as scientist fill in gaps of understanding within a dominant paradigm and it is contrasted by "revolutionary science" when new paradigms are being created based on new data (or new understanding of old data.)

Revelation on the other hand, comes from a very different way of finding knowledge. Revelation is a particular aspect of the mystic experience. Mystical experiences are when our minds commune with the divine directly. One might define mystical as the direct experience of absolute reality through extra-rational and extra-sensory perception. To see without our physical eyes and to know without our rational brain. We believe that mystical experiences touch on truth in its preconceptual form, as a full acknowledgement of what is. Mystical data often comes to us as full formed facts. Different people within WildSeed hold different positions on this data. Some believe that the data from mystical experience is processed subconsciously based on our preconceived notions and ideology. So it is a "fact" in that same way a scientific fact is, that is to say contingent. Others believe that the data is received as facts from the universe, source or god and not subject to the individual mystics biases. Yet, all WildSeed beliefs that the communication of this data into language requires it to be put into conceptual boxes and be

filtered through our personal and linguistic biases and then is filtered again through the cultural, linguistic and personal biases of the people who receive that data.

We at WildSeed believe that there are many traditional practices for communing more completely and less biased with the divine. Some people are able to receive revelations from the divine. Here revelations are basically large amounts of facts received from mystical experiences that are communicated to others with a minimal amount of filtering and biases (but never without any biases from the revealer or the audience). We believe that have been a great many of revelations from people who we call prophets. Our wisdom traditions are generally full of such revelations and the collective commentary of those revelations. Some WildSeeds believe that certain historical figures received massive revelations from the universe, Gods or spiritual beings that had an intent behind them. They were meant for whole societies to hear. Some of us refer to such people as Manifestation of God (following the term used by the Baha'i faith) or simply great prophets. These people include the Buddha, White Buffalo Woman, Jesus, Muhammad, Moses, Baha'u'llah, Zoroaster and the Bab as well as others whose names we know and some who are lost to us. Still other take the more Buddhist approach and suggest that some people can be enlightened or partially enlightened through meditative practice and share insights from perspective of an enlightened mind. Regardless, we all believe that societies still need to interpret such revelations in much the same way we interpret scientific facts and philosophical belief: collectively, with intellectual humility, love and rigor. (Importantly, no one in the WildSeed Society is claiming to have had a revelation that is guiding our work.)

Lastly, the humanities are all about the articulation, expression, representation or play with the meanings and facts that arise from science, philosophy and revelation. Again, under this system to be human to reflect on relationship to the world and narrate that self-reflective understanding (in words and deeds) for collective thriving. So the humanities are disciplines of that articulate humanity in art, dance, writing, movie making, performance, design, architecture, organizational development, social change and related disciplines. Thus humanities are the paths through which the insights and wisdom of science, philosophy and spirituality come into our everyday social lives.

So, in order for the Philosophies of WildSeed to be interpreted, they need to be laid out clearly. The different Philosophies of WildSeed are different interpretations, dreams and wonderful imaginings brought together by an alignment with a few basic commitments and principles.

The basic commitments of Philosophies of WildSeed are:

1. An ontological commitment to relationality or process. That is fancy way of saying a central belief that relationships help define us and everything else that exists; that things can only be fully understood in relation to others things. A moderate commitment would

be a caution against reductivism that seeks to explain everything as nothing more than the sum of its parts, which like parts of a machine, can be best understood when taken apart and studied in isolation. A more maximal stance would be that every “thing” is actually a relationship between different parts or aspects of an undivided whole, an event of the universe folding and meeting itself like waves in the ocean.

2. An ontological commitment to holarchy, of a world organized as systems within systems. This follows from the commitment to relationality. It is an understanding that the universe is organized not just in relationships but that those relationships are systemic. A system is a pattern of events whose properties are owed more to the organizations of its parts than the material of its parts. The properties of our universe, for instance, stem less from the material that makes up say quantum entities but in their patterns of interaction. In addition, every system is composed of subsystems as well as part of larger systems. Our body is full of organs and biological systems, and we are part of ecological and social systems. The more complex a system—meaning the more relationships each part has with every other part—the more properties a system has that are other than sum of its parts.

3. An ontological commitment to consciousness and spirit as systemic properties existence. Following the work of Joanna Macy and the Dharma of Natural Systems, we believe that spirit and consciousness as result of the complexity of the universe rather than independent things. Specifically that consciousness is the subjective experience of internal aspect of systems. It is a thing that arises within complex relationships rather than a specific quality of the material that makes up our neurons for example. Thus it is possible, even likely that all systems from computer code to an ecology to the planet itself are in some important sense conscious. In a similar vein what we experience as spirit is a crystallization of the whole. It is a system taken as an undivided whole presence that consciousness can grasp. This explains the mystic experience as the subjective interiorization, “touching” or communing with the whole. Its why mystical experience always seem transcendent and give a sense of profound interconnection. In a holarchic universe all systems in some way interpenetrate each other and communing with the spirit or undivided whole of any particular aspect is like touching all that is. Thus as praxis of communing with the true, beautiful and the good, Philosophies of WildSeed put a premium on gnosis or mystical knowledge that comes from direct intuitive mental experience of communing with absolute reality which we believe to be the spirit of the universe (the suchness of all-that-is).

4. An ontological commitment to the human being as a process of becoming. This means that humans are always in process defined by the quality and nature of our being not by what we do or produce. To be human is not to do rational things or have logical explanations. To be human is to have the capacity to reason true but also to feel, to imagine, to desire, to be connected to the universe and to be able to see the universe in ourselves and ourselves in the universe. Under this view we are not, as Aristotle suggests, what we habitually do but rather a system or set of relationships between atoms, molecules, cells, microfauna and social entities that give us the capacity to be in particular ways. We are thus an individualization of collective experience

(social beings) and individualization of the universal system/all-that-is (sacred and divine). So to, as Grace Lee Boggs exhorts us, make more human human beings is not a great civilizing project of rationalizing society or producing great works of art and science but to increase our active capacity to feel, imagine, reason, love, desire, create, destroy, discern and commune deeply with each other and the universe.

5. An ontological commitment to the reality of society. This might be a strange thing to say explicitly but we live in a world in which Margaret Thatcher famously stated there is no such thing as society and then politicians around the globe began to set policy as if this were true. Yet the Philosophies of WildSeed believes that society exist as something other than the sum of the individuals and materials that comprise it. The realm of the social has properties of its own that arise from the organization of materials and people that comprise it. Therefore, additional cognitive, emotional and mystic abilities are possible at the social level that may not be at the individual level. Examples might include the ability for community to process trauma, have mystical revelations or discover scientific truths that an individual person never could.

6. Following from these ontological commitments is a metaphysics (rules that we believe govern the things we believe to exist) based in mutual causality. This metaphysics askew ideas of prime movers or first causes of a created universe. In this view the universe is a self-organizing system that has consciousness (though adherents differ as to whether it has sentience or intent). This self-organization exists in relationships of mutual causality (similar to what in Buddhism is often called *paticca samuppada* or dependent co-arising.) Under mutual causality all causes are interdependent on each other with no thing, action or single process being determinate.

7. A metaphysical commitment to systemic polycentrism, a world in which different rules govern different levels of systems. Systemic polycentrism is the belief that different levels of systems operate by different rules. This means that the laws of biology don't necessarily boil down into the laws of physics. There is a minimalist approach to this, which that it is simply not fruitful to trying to boil down biology into physics because there is a lot that is valued by humans for all sorts of reasons that don't really have much to do with quantum particles. The use physics to describe them might be technically accurate but not socially useful as, for WildSeed, the goal of science is not to discover the theory of everything that lets us predict and control the universe. The maximalist approach would be to say that different levels of systemic organization creates new properties in and off itself that are not present or related to properties of matter at lower levels either through emergence or some form of downward causation (the belief that properties in higher levels of system organization change the properties of matter on a lower level of system organization.)

8. Following from those metaphysics is an epistemology (a theory of what is knowable and how we can know it) of ambiguity. Things are ambiguous to humans and that ambiguity is largely unavoidable because to understand something conceptually we must name and define it. To

name and define is to narrow the suchness or vastness of things to make them more delineable and categorizable than they really are. There is a loss of understanding in the rational conception. Thus all language and models are “fingers pointing at a moon” not even a full description of the moon. The spirit of a thing can only be grasped with the intuition and can exist fully only as pre-conceptual experience. Any knowledge of wisdom drawn from metaphysical exploration is only partial (aspects of an undivided whole). Articulations of those particular aspects of a metaphysical experience are altered by the bias of mind trying to understand them and the cultural bias of the language through which they are articulated and then altered a third time by the minds that receive the articulation. Mystical training and mental conditioning can help a person understand more wisdom from mystical experiences and collective meaning making (aided by science and social theory) can help correct for some of the alterations that are otherwise unavoidable. These mystical understandings can inform philosophical approaches which in turn structure scientific data gained through experimentation into usable facts of life through processes of characterization, interpretation and classification. While science (including the so-called human sciences of sociology, psychology, history etc) cannot eliminate philosophical questions through an accumulation of data, it can falsify certain philosophies as being demonstrably inaccurate models of the world. Therefore science needs philosophy and philosophy needs science. While science does not mysticism to continue its accumulation of data and mysticism certainly does need science to continue experiencing the divine, humanity needs both to combine into a philosophy (which again is ideas about the beautiful, good and true and a lifestyle in alignment with them.)

9. In addition to the epistemology of ambiguity is an epistemology of the conditioned brain. This is belief that our brains and states of consciousness get conditioned through use and experience. This starts very early as our capacity to feel certain emotions is based, at least in part, on seeing them in adults as babies. Our early years shape how our brain functions in a variety of ways that we are only just coming to understand. Likewise, the more we use of the skills of reason or deduction, the more our brain will start to filter information and crystalize neuropathways to facilitate that kind of thinking. The same is true of meditation and our mystical practices. The more we develop those skills, the more our brain fashions itself to be able to do them effectively. Over time, this can cause other faculties of the brain to be less sharp. Thus, overall, our brains can be said to be finetuned by environment and at least partially culturally conditioned. This takes our ideas of social construction of reality past merely our identities and institutions being socially constructed.

10. Following from the metaphysics of ambiguity is an ethic of skillful right action. This ethics is predicated on the view that morality is merely the internalization of aspects of a social systems values. There is no absolute morality, no good and evil beyond social designations that arise from beliefs about which actions lead to particular social ideals. It views ethics as the philosophy of how we should relate to each other based on set of social ideals. The social ideal of the Philosophy of WildSeed is Liberation. Because Liberation can take many forms and our understanding of it (and everything else) is to some extent ambiguous it doesn't make sense to think of things in terms of right or wrong. In its place, the ethics of skillful right action seeks

practices that limit ambiguity and are more likely to promote a world of liberatory worlds. This means choosing actions from the deepest insight available that most contribute to Liberation as you see it while leaving as many options open for other people to pursue their own interpretations of Liberation as possible. Thus skillful right action requires thinking and visioning deeply about what Liberation means to you, understanding contexts and the systems within which you are operating so that you can see the mutual causality at play and learning more about what others people want and your actions affect their ability to achieve that. This is the basis of Liberation Logic, a core organizing concept of WildSeed Society.

